

CONNECTICUT Land Conservation Council

Testimony in Opposition to H.B. No. 6354, *An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government* (sections 132-134)

To the Appropriations Committee

Submitted by: Amy Blaymore Paterson, Esq., Executive Director

March 22, 2013

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STAFF

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Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Committee:

Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) in opposition to ***Governor's H.B. No. 6354: An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning General Government (sections 132-134)***, which would merge the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) into the Office of Governmental Accountability (OGA).

The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) works with land trusts, other conservation and advocacy organizations, government entities and landowners to increase the pace, quality and scale of land conservation in Connecticut while assuring the perpetual, high quality stewardship of conserved lands in the state. As Connecticut's umbrella organization for the land conservation community, CLCC focuses on building land trust capacity and sustainability, leading a unified land conservation voice for public policies that support land conservation, and engaging broad constituencies to foster a deep understanding of the benefits and need for land conservation. CLCC is guided by a Steering Committee with statewide representation.

CLCC contends that a merger of the CEQ into OGA would serve to undermine CEQ's efficiency, effectiveness and independence.

Created in 1971, the CEQ is the state's independent watch-dog agency that the public relies upon to, *inter alia*, monitor environmental progress, assess the efficacy of state environmental laws, policies and programs, and investigate alleged violations of environmental laws. Acting through its nine-member volunteer board and just two staff, CEQ provides the public with these services efficiently and effectively and at minimal cost to the state.

It is difficult to understand how a move of the CEQ into an agency with neither a connection to state environmental programs nor expertise in environmental policy would result in any meaningful benefit to the state's budget or general operation. Indeed, it would not be surprising if this move would only serve to exacerbate administrative inefficiencies – with the public and the quality of our environment paying the price.

On behalf of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council and our members throughout the state, I respectfully request that the Committee vote against Sections 132-134 in order to protect CEQ's unique position of independence and assure its continued ability to carry out its mission on behalf of the public interest.

Thank you for your time and consideration.